

Inside Religion

NATL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

REPORT ACCUSES FBI, CIA

LES KINSOLVING

The need for utmost care and restraint in the current investigation of the CIA and the FBI should be obvious — not only in the importance of the agencies to the security of the U.S., but in their having suffered for five years under Richard Nixon.

A committee of the National Council of Churches (NCC) has, however, leaped into this sensitive area in such a manner as to suggest the Keystone Cops, under the joint command of Harpo Marx and Bozo The Clown.

In a background statement published by the NCC, this committee charged:

"There are indications and allegations — though no hard evidence — that from 1971 to 1973, persons showing what purported to be credentials of federal agencies, CIA, FBI, — and in one instance threatening an Interchurch Center (NCC headquarters) employee with a gun if he 'opened his mouth' about their visit — gained admittance to the premises of the Interchurch Center at night..."

This written report made no mention of the fact that last year a band of black militant thugs from Harlem occupied the entire floor of the Interchurch Center for 28 hours, and reportedly inspected all files. No charges were filed against these people by the NCC authorities.

But in its apparent effort to smear the FBI and the CIA, the NCC has published a statement of serious charges based entirely on "indications and allegations — though no hard evidence." If this seems incredible, or an agency of 32 religious denominations, there was more along this line:

"Amateur electronics tests seemed to indicate the

presence of 'bugs' on several telephone lines, including that of the Deputy General Secretary of the N.C.C."

Commented the Rev. Gerald McAllister, NCC Governing Board Member from San Antonio, who eventually succeeded in having this NCC staff report amended:

"I gather that those using these 'amateur electronics tests' didn't know whether or not their equipment was working."

But at this point, Chicago Sun Times' religion writer, Roy Larson, noted that the Rev. Sterling Cary, President of the NCC, had told him during an interview "There is proof positive that there were bugs."

But the Rev. Dean Kelley of the NCC staff promptly conceded:

"We couldn't afford the electronic surveillance — which would have cost us \$1,000 per room."

(The Rev. Mr. Kelley was identified by the NCC Dept. of Information as the NCC's "expert on religious and civil liberties." Yet Kelley served on this committee which produced the set of unsubstantiated charges against the FBI and the CIA. Moreover, Kelley angrily refused to confirm or deny his reported authorship of this report — which information NCC authorities are continuing to conceal.)

Considering the NCC's dwindling but still multi-million dollar budget, \$1,000 per room would have been far less expensive in the long run than the serious increase in the NCC credibility gap, occasioned by charges without evidence — along with conflicting statements from President Cary and Liberties Expert Kelley.

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